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SCHOOLS

Winchester ready for opening day of schools

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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The new Lynch Elementary School building is finished, with the school ready for the Sept. 4 opening day.
WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/FRANK SITEMAN

Ever since school closed for the summer in late June, officials have been getting ready for an opening day that will include a new Lynch E School, $800,000 in renovations at Muraco, two literacy pilot prog

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a host of other additions and physical upgrades throughout the entire district.

“We concentrated on our facilities, in general,” said Superintendent Dr. Frank Hackett, days before doors opened on the 2025-26 school year. “The Lynch is a huge accomplishment and we’re so incredibly excited to see that it’s now complete. It’s something that the community has been working on for the last five to six, maybe seven years, from application to completion.”

Children cut the ribbon to officially open Winchester’s new Lynch Elementary School. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/WILL DOWD

Hackett said it’s been a long road with the Lynch, but he credited the community and the members of the Educational Facilities Planning and Building Committee (EFPBC) for their work.

“We are so fortunate to have such very talented members serving on the EFPBC,” he said. “And it’s incredible how much the building looks like the renderings.”

A ribbon-cutting at the school on Aug. 25 brought out hundreds to check out the new building and take tours inside.

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Hackett added it's wonderful to see students and staff back at Lynch, given the difficulties of placing everyone at the tight quarters at Parkhurst for the last two years and working through transportation difficulties.

Muraco School

Winchester is looking at the possibility of submitting a new school application to the Massachusetts School Building Administration (MSBA) for Muraco. But that process could also take at least five years, start to finish.

The school, however, needed upgrades the town couldn't afford not to make. Hackett said the School Department worked with the Select Board to find funding to make repairs and renovations.

The town budgeted $800,000 for the work, with some of the contracting work being done by the Winchester Department of Public Works.

"We were mainly replacing floors and replacing the sinks in classrooms," Hackett said. "We were also able to get some work done in taking over the library and turning it into the cafeteria."

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Muraco windows were taped over as the school underwent renovations, which included some asbestos remediation when the floors were taken up. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/TARA HUGHES

Hackett said students have been eating lunch in the gymnasium for a number of years, halting physical education classes from taking

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“It’s a much better space,” he said, of the new cafeteria. “We’re not tying up phys ed classes and there’s a lot of light now. The space turned out beautifully, it has such a sunny flow.”

What about the library?

Hackett said the school has two classrooms connected by a moveable wall so the solution was easy. He said the wall was removed and the new library found its home.

“It served as a really good space,” he said. “It’s been a really great move all around for the kids, the staff and the families.

A look at the new floors inside the Muraco School. COURTESY PHOTO/JULIE MARIE

He added Muraco’s classrooms have also all been re-painted. And, additional inclusive playground equipment was installed, thanks to the Winchester Parent Advisory Council (WinPAC).

“It’s been really incredible that we’ve been able to do this,” Hackett said, of all the upgrades. “We were confident we could get it done before school was open and we have. Although, we do have to install some sinl fall.”

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Hackett said with approximately 300 students currently enrolled at Muraco, it was “super important” to make sure the school received some attention.

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What else has been done?

But it’s not just Muraco. Hackett sent out a message to families via ParentSquare with the following improvements made to all the district’s schools:

Winchester Preschool: An all-new Winchester Preschool has been launched within the new Lynch Elementary School.

Ambrose Elementary School: New roof completed; additional inclusive playground equipment installed, thanks to the Winchester Parent Advisory Council (WinPAC).

Lincoln Elementary School: New playground equipment installed; playground resurfaced.

Vinson-Owen Elementary School: Additional inclusive playground equipment installed, thanks to the Winchester Parent Advisory Council (WinPAC); playground resurfaced.

McCall Middle School: New roof project underway, to be completed this fall.

Winchester High School: New gymnasium project underway, to be completed in mid-October; corrosion inhibitor applied in the ba

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"We have never done anything like this in the district since I've been here," Hackett said, of all the improvements being made at once.

Literacy program

Winchester families have been waiting for more than a year for the School Department to come up with a literacy program. In the end, a group made up of educators picked out two programs to pilot in grades K-5 for this year.

In June 2024, a Collaborative for Educational Services study was undertaken "to understand the current state of the district's elementary literacy program in Winchester, and the ways that educators and parents experience it."

At the time, Hackett admitted the results of the study were painful and hard to hear, but in a way it was also good because it was the impetus to seek out true change.

The 111-page report contains numerous findings and stated pretty clearly that educators and families wanted a greater sense of safety, collaboration and trust when it came to district level leadership.

Click here for the full story from the Winchester News on the report.

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Parents, teachers and residents attended a School Committee meeting in June 2024 to hear the results of a report from the Collaborative for Educational Services about the state of early literacy in Winchester schools. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF/WINCAM PHOTO/TARA HUGHES

The goal of the new pilots is to make a final selection for the entire district by March in order to put the new program into the school budget for fiscal year 2027.

But that doesn't mean only students in certain classes will benefit from the pilots. Hackett said the School Department hired Melissa Newell as its new literacy coordinator in order to implement an across-the-board approach.

"We want to include an evidence-based approach to literacy," Hackett said. "We want to involve all our kids, all our teachers and we want to be proactive in developing our literary practices, regardless of who is in what pilot. The pilots will support the literacy practices."

Other program/staffing changes

At the McCall, students will be seeing a change in their schedules. Hackett said students have been in the same period one class each day at the same time.

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This year, however, Hackett said McCall students will see that first period move around the schedule, much like at Winchester High School.

“It rotates at the high school and it’s really good for the kids and the staff,” Hackett said. “It adds some variety to their day.”

Students will also see a 30-minute flexible block in the middle of the day. Hackett said this will allow students to receive support or catch up on homework or makeup exams. It will also be easier to pull special education students out to receive services.

As for staffing across the district, the superintendent said turnover has been very low.

“I think it’s the fewest retirements we’ve had,” he said. “We owe our current stability to all the faculty and staff. We had one administrative role turn over, but that has been filled. It’s definitely the lowest number of vacant positions we’ve had to fill and that’s good.”

Ready for a new year

Hackett is ready for the doors to open Sept. 4. In fact, he’s downright cheerful about it.

“I think there are multiple reasons why,” he said, of why he’s so optimistic about the upcoming school year. “The whole situation at Parkhurst has been very complicated. It was a lot to manage, especially on the transportation side.”

He said the promise was to transport each Lynch School student to the Parkhurst and the addition of a bridge project in town complicat
entire situation.

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"Whenever you have kids in transition at a building, it's always unsettling," Hackett said. "There are a lot of moving parts, things we just didn't anticipate. In year two, things were smoother, but they were still in a temporary building and there were all sorts of heating and cooling issues. We were constantly having to work on something. That's all gone now and I feel like things are more stable."

Old cabinets and equipment outside the Muraco School earlier this summer, as the school underwent renovations. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/TARA HUGHES

Hackett added the district is ready for the literacy pilot, which will take it one step further in its goals to provide the best program for the students.

And there's the fact that he's going into his fifth year in the superintendent's role.

"It takes time in these roles to learn the community and the scho system," Hackett said. "In year five, it feels better for me. You're also not

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hearing much about the pandemic anymore. When I first got here, we were dealing with masks and vaccines...it's still lingering, but it feels like things are better. Plus people are applying for jobs and we're able to fill positions more easily than two or three years ago.

"There's just a lot of great stuff going on in Winchester," he continued. "I'm still excited about it all. I would say that every year, I still go in excited."

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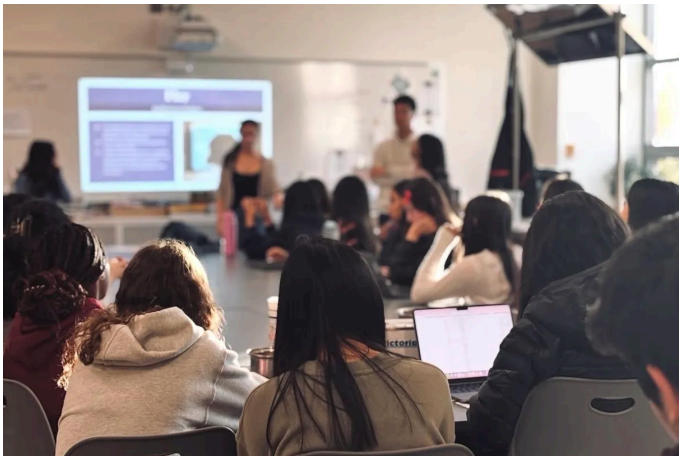
SCHOOLS

Winchester High School club hopes art contest will foster interest in Black history, culture

When then-freshman Christie Clark approached Carson Sarpong about becoming a co-founder for her club, Black Student Union, he was hesitant. Three years later,



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Winchester High School's speech and debate team sees a meteoric rise

Winchester's speech and deb most things, began with on students competing in its in receiving little attention from the school. Yet

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Sarpong is the president, and the club has organized the Black History Project, a contest that invites students to create art about Black history and culture. The

TAVISHI CHATTOPADHYAY | CORRESPONDENT

February 5, 2026

now, what began as a modest club for fun, has grown into something significant and respected by the entire Massachusetts debate

XIYUE ERIC HAN | CORRESPONDENT

January 30, 2026

SCHOOLS

Winchester High School Athletic Department reschedules open house for 8th graders

The following was submitted by the Winchester High School Athletics Department: On Monday, Feb. 2, the Winchester High School Athletics Department will be hosting its rescheduled open house night for 8th graders from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Come to an informational meeting, meet the coaches, learn

January 27, 2026

EVENTS

Winchester High School Black Student Union launches 'Black History Project' contest, community showcase

The following was submitted by the Black Student Union at Winchester High School: The Black Student Union (BSU) at Winchester High School (WHS) is proud to announce the launch of the Black History Project, a contest designed to foster education, research, and creative expression surrounding Black history and culture. The

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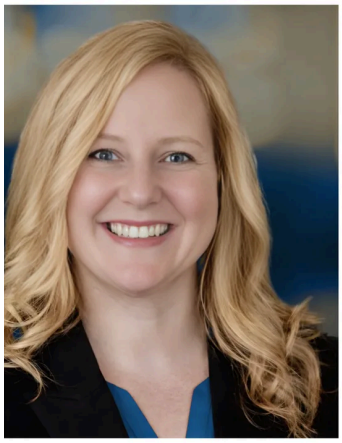

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER
March 4, 2026

FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and

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Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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